

Guide to applying for financial support for 16-18 year olds

This guide is for learners who are:

- aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026 or
- aged 19 to 24 at 31 August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- be aged 19 at 31 August 2026 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')

The 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary

Learners who are in one or more of the groups below can apply for a bursary of up to £1,200 (if they are participating on a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more). Learners on a study programme of less than 30 weeks study will be able to apply for a pro-rata amount of bursary. The bursary is to support learners with costs associated with attending a course such as travel, kit and uniform. Eligible learners will also receive free meals.

The defined groups are learners who are:

- in care (not privately fostered)
- care leavers or learners in permanent fostering under a Special Guardianship Order
- in receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner.
- Receiving DLA (Disability Living Allowance) or PIP (Personal Independence Payment) in their own right as well as ESA (Employment Support Allowance) or UC (Universal Credit) in their own right.

Learners do not need to live independently of their parents to be eligible for bursary funding - they can claim ESA or UC in their own right while living in the parental home. Parents will not be able to continue to claim Child Benefit if the learner successfully applies for ESA. Learners will need to provide a utility bill in their own name to evidence that they are financially supporting themselves.

In some cases, a young person might be eligible for a bursary because they are in one or more of the defined groups, but their financial needs are already met and/or they have no relevant costs e.g. a learner in local authority care whose educational costs are covered in full by the local authority. In these circumstances we may decide to award a reduced bursary or no bursary at all. Students will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and £1200 will not automatically be awarded. Please speak with the Student Funding and Transport Officer if you have any queries regarding this.

To be eligible for the bursary learners must also:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026
- Must be resident in the UK for the 3 years prior to the course start date

A learner receiving support under the Bursary Scheme will not be eligible to receive support via any other bursary scheme operated by the College.

Learners on Apprenticeship programmes do not qualify for the 16-19 Bursary or Discretionary Learner Support Funds.

How do I apply?

Please visit <https://bacoll.paymystudent.com/portal/> to apply. You will be required to attach household income evidence/evidence of looked after or care leaver status and we cannot accept an application without appropriate evidence.

Evidence of eligibility

- Learners in receipt of qualifying benefits, a letter from DWP that states the benefit the learner is entitled to (they must be entitled to the benefits in their own right). The evidence must confirm that the young person can be in further education or training (some young people in receipt of benefits are not allowed to participate).
- Learners who are in receipt of Universal Credit must supply screen shots of their most recent UC statement. This must be the full statement showing the breakdown of payment including all payments and deductions. Evidence of a tenancy report or child benefit letter/child's birth certificate may also be required.
- Learners who are in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority - this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority. Evidence of income is also required so that your financial need can be assessed, for example, a bank statement in the learners name.

If you are unable to attach all evidence to the application, please forward the remainder to lisa.robson@bacoll.ac.uk. Please be advised that the application will not submit unless a form of evidence is attached.

How do I receive it?

No cash payments can be made under new government guidance. We can fund items as detailed on the application form. This includes:

- Travel
- Kit/Uniform
- Free Meals / Meal allowance
- Stationery
- Trips
- Books

16-18 Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)

DLSF supports learners to help overcome the individual barriers to participation they face, for example help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment. These funds are aimed at those most in need and not in receipt of the 16-18 Student Bursary.

To be eligible to receive financial support in the 2026 to 2027 academic year the learner must:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026 or
- be aged 19 to 24 at 31 August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

- be aged 19 at 31 August 2026 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
- Must be resident in the UK for the 3 years prior to the course start date
- a 16 to 19 traineeship programme

Eligibility is determined by a household income assessment. See below for further information:

Support Type	Household income eligibility
Free Meals in FE - £4.50	Household must be in receipt of Universal Credit, Income Support, JSA, ESA, State Pension Credit, Supported under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
Meal Allowance - £4.50 Travel Trips/Visits	Household income under £70,000 per annum (based on tax year ending April 2026 or current income)
Kit and uniform Books	Household income under £45,000 (based on tax year ending April 2026 or current income)
Stationery Support for University/Open Days	Household income under £35,000 (based on tax year ending April 2026 or current income)

Please be advised, giving false or incomplete evidence or information that leads to an incorrect or overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. This may result in a referral to the police with the possibility of prosecution.

Here's a further explanation of these funds:

Free Meals / Meal Allowance

Free meals will be awarded if your household income is under £70,000 per annum. It can be accessed at both campuses from the eateries and campus shop. This cannot be used for hot or cold drinks from Starbucks or the College Shop/Canteen (with the exception of water).

Travel Support

To qualify, you'll need to:

- Live **at least 1.5 miles** from campus
- Have a **gross annual household income** of less than **£70,000**

Once your application is approved, you'll receive a **P Card** – this is a pre-paid Visa card that makes paying for your bus travel quick and easy. This will be delivered to the college and you will be notified when its ready to collect, please keep an eye on your student e mail. This usually takes 3-5 days.

How it works:

- Your P Card will be topped up every **Monday** with an amount based on the number of days you're timetabled to be in college.
- It can **only be used on bus services** (it won't work in shops).
- Just tap your card on the contactless reader when you get on the bus.

When you apply, make sure you tell us:

- How many buses you take to get to college (one way)
- How many days per week you attend

If your travel changes – for example, if you start a placement – let **Lisa Robson (Student Finance and Transport Coordinator)** know so we can adjust your top-up.

Please note:

- If you withdraw from your course, you'll need to return your P Card to the college.
- Lost cards can be replaced for a £3 fee.

For those learners who are unable to travel independently because of a medical condition or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), we would advise parents/carers to contact Durham County Hall to request information regarding their travel award scheme.

Learners using their own transport can apply for mileage costs but only where there is no reasonable bus service. Mileage is paid at 26p per mile.

All travel claims are subject to attendance checks and must be accompanied with receipts/tickets, where the claim is for use of public transport. Reimbursements are made monthly in arrears, direct into your bank account.

Uniform and kit costs

Kit and Uniform may be awarded if your household income is under £45,000 per annum. Learners should complete their kit/uniform order forms (as issued by the curriculum area) and submit these with their application for financial support. Alternatively, when you receive your outcome letter from your application, you will be requested to provide the sizing of items you require. We will order items on your behalf. The amount awarded is dependent on the course requirements. Please note you may need to purchase items before you start the course and the amount of grant awarded is not guaranteed to pay these costs in full. Reimbursements will only be made subject to proof of purchase. Not all learners will be eligible for this support. All funded items remain the property of Bishop Auckland College/SWDT. If you withdraw from your course you must return the items to avoid being invoiced for the cost.

Stationery

Stationery may be awarded if your household income is under £35,000 per annum. If you require stationery, a basic stationery kit can be provided to you, please ensure you select this on your application form. This will be a one-off kit and will include the essentials required to attend your course.

Trips

From time to time the college arrange educational visits. If your household income is under the £70,000 threshold, your travel and accommodation will be funded under the Learner Support Funds. You will also receive a meal allowance of £4.50 per day or will be provided with a packed lunch. All funding including that for trips is based on a first come, first served basis.

Books

If you require any additional books to ensure you complete your course/aid you with the completion of your course, these can be provided to you if your household income is under £45,000. Please e mail finance@bacoll.ac.uk with the request and include your tutor in the e mail so It can be confirmed with them that this book is essential to you.

How do I apply for Funding?

You will need to complete an application form for financial assistance via <https://bacoll.paymystudent.com/portal/> . You must provide evidence of the current total income received into your **household**. This includes the income of your parents/spouse/partner. Please provide a copy of the Tax Credit Award Notice (TCAN) 2026-2027 if your parents are in receipt of Tax Credits. We cannot accept 'Provisional' TCANs. If the household is not in receipt of tax credits please supply a copy of your/parents current household benefits letter (dated in the last month) or copies of their 24/25 P60s. Please supply photocopies only as we are unable to return evidence. If your parents receive Universal Credit please provide screen shots of the last 3 UC statements. This must be the full statement showing name and address and include the breakdown of all payments and deductions.

Childcare Support

Care to Learn (C-2-L)

If you are a young parent, C-2-L can help pay for your childcare and any additional travel costs whilst you are studying. You must:

- have started your course or study programme before you turn 20
- be the parent or main carer and be in receipt of Child Benefit for the child(ren)
- be living and studying in England and be either a British citizen or a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country
- using an Ofsted registered childcare provider (this can be a childminder, nursery or pre-school)

You can apply using the application form which can be found at <https://bacoll.ac.uk/students/student-support/funding-loans/>

Should the C2L allowance (£180 per week) not cover the full amount of funding required, the remaining will be funded via learner support funds.

Emergency/hardship support

Any learner with exceptional hardship or domestic emergency needs can request financial support to enable them to remain on course. This is normally a one-off support payment or very short-term support. It cannot be used as a substitute for state benefits or living costs.

Terms and Conditions of Funding

Attendance

Financial support from the national schemes or funds from Bishop Auckland College/SWDT are subject to learners attending college in line with their full timetable. Where learners fall below this, we reserve the right to revoke all funding. We will invoice parent/carers for reasonable recovery of the value of funded items. **Authorised absences** are not positive attendance.

Withdrawals

If you withdraw from your course, you will not receive further financial support. You may also have to repay any financial support you have been awarded. You must return your kit/uniform /Travel Pass/Books and Campus I.D. card. Failure to do so will result in an invoice being issued for the total cost of these items.

Appeals

If you believe your funding application has not been assessed correctly, you do not receive a grant or you are not happy with the level of support allocated, you can appeal. Your appeal should be made in writing and addressed to:

Appeals, Finance Manager, Bishop Auckland College, Woodhouse Lane, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6JZ.

You can only appeal once regarding a specific situation - if your appeal is declined, you are unable to re-appeal for the same reason again, unless you can provide new additional information to support your case. The appeal decision is final. If you are unhappy with the decision, you can make use of the College's formal complaints procedure.

You will not receive funding if you have outstanding debts to the College or your household income is above the rates stated.

All guidance and eligibility criteria mentioned in this booklet are correct at the time of print, but the College reserves the right to amend any of this information during the academic year following government changes to eligibility criteria.

The Finance Department

The Finance staff are here to ensure you receive the best advice and support with your application for financial support. If you need help, or would like to speak on an individual basis, please do not hesitate to contact the Finance Department to arrange a meeting/discussion. The office is available throughout the summer holidays.

You can contact the Finance Department by telephone on:

01388 443113

01388 443115

01388 743166

01388 443037

or by e-mail at finance@bacoll.ac.uk or by post at the following address:

Finance Department

DLSF

Bishop Auckland College

Woodhouse Lane

Bishop Auckland

Co Durham

DL14 6JZ